

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 CU-04 NSC-10 COME-00 IO-13 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9336

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5157

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SOCI, KS

SUBJECT: U.S CHURCH INTEREST IN ARRESTED ROK CHRISTIAN SOCIAL
ACTIVISTS

REF: SEOUL 5140

1. ON AUGUST 3 TWO STAFF MEMBERS OF THE U.S. NATIONAL
COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST VISITED EMBASSY BRIEFLY. THE
TWO WERE EDWIN M. LUIDENS, DIRECTOR FOR EAST ASIA IN
THE OVERSEAS DIVISION, PROGRAM DEPARTMENT, AND GEORGE
TODD.

2. THE TWO MEN SAID THEY WANTED SIMPLY TO INFORM
EMBASSY THAT THEY HAD BEEN UNDER HEAVY ROK SURVEILLANCE
DURING THEIR BRIEF VISIT TO SEOUL. PURPOSE OF VISIT HAD
BEEN TO LOOK INTO STATE OF CHURCH-GOVERNMENT RELATION-
SHIPS, PARTICULARLY FOCUSING ON ARREST OF RE. PAK AND
OTHER CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTIVISTS. IN COURSE OF
CONVERSION THEY INDICATED THAT IT WAS THEIR IMPRESSION
KOREAN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ARE COALESCING IN THE
FACE OF GOVERNMENT PRESSURE.

3. THE TWO STAFF MEMBERS DID NOT REGISTER PROTEST
OVER THE ROK SURVEILLANCE, NOR ASK ANY EMBASSY ASSISTANCE.

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4. COMMENT: GIVEN ROK SENSITIVITIES ABOUT CASE OF

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTIVISTS, WE BELIEVE IT HIGHLY LIKELY
THE TWO U.S. CHURCHMEN WERE IN FACT UNDER
SURVEILLANCE.

5. WE HAVE HEARD FROM CHRISTIAN SOURCES THAT KOREAN
CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE EXPRESSIONS OF
SUPPORT COMING TO THEM FROM CHURCH GROUPS ABROAD. IT
IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT CHRISTIAN LEADERS CLEARLY DO NOT
DESIRE ANY CONFRONTATION WITH GOVERNMENT.
HOWEVER, GROWING OUTSIDE INTEREST IN THE SITUATION OF KOREAN
CHURCHES MAY WELL ENCOURAGE THEM TO STAND MORE FIRMLY
IN THE FACE OF GOVERNMENT PRESSURES.

6. FOR OUR PART, WE ARE CONTINUING TO POINT OUT
QUIETLY TO ROKG LEADERS THE PROBLEMS THEY ARE CREATING
BY ACTIONS WHICH CAN BE INTERPRETED AS ATTACKS OR
PRESSURES ON THE CHURCHES.
HABIB

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